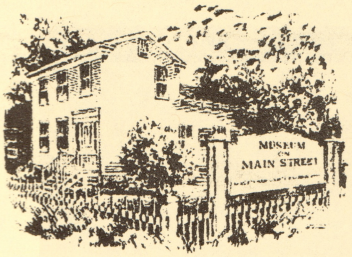

IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • APRIL 2005

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INFORMATION

Published Seven Times A Year From September-May.

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Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336

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Web Site:
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Annual dues: January-December individual, $15; couple/family $25; student or senior (60+) $10; senior couple $19; business/association $50; patron $100.

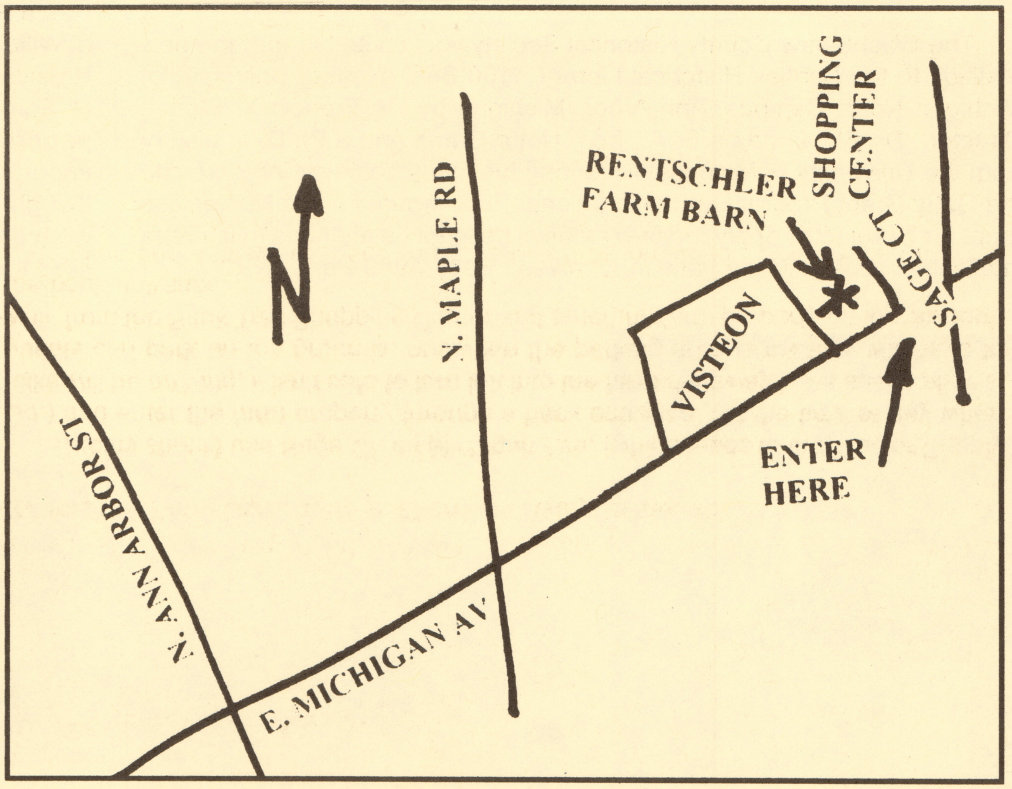
Annual Meeting And Potluck Supper

Wednesday May 18, 2005 6 P.M. with dining at 6:30.
Rentschler Farm barn, 1265 E. Michigan Ave., Saline, MI

Guests should use Sage Ct. off Michigan Ave. (which leads to the Tractor Supply Co.) and enter the farm property through a back entrance. (At the time of day when folks will be arriving, it isn't safe to turn left into the farm driveway.) As space allows, guests can park on the grounds, but when the parking area is full they will have to walk from the Sauk Trail Shopping Center and enter the farm property on foot through the back entrance.

Beverages, tableware, ham and breads will be provided. Bring a dish to pass that serves 8. We will be in an old farm building which is unheated, so dress accordingly.

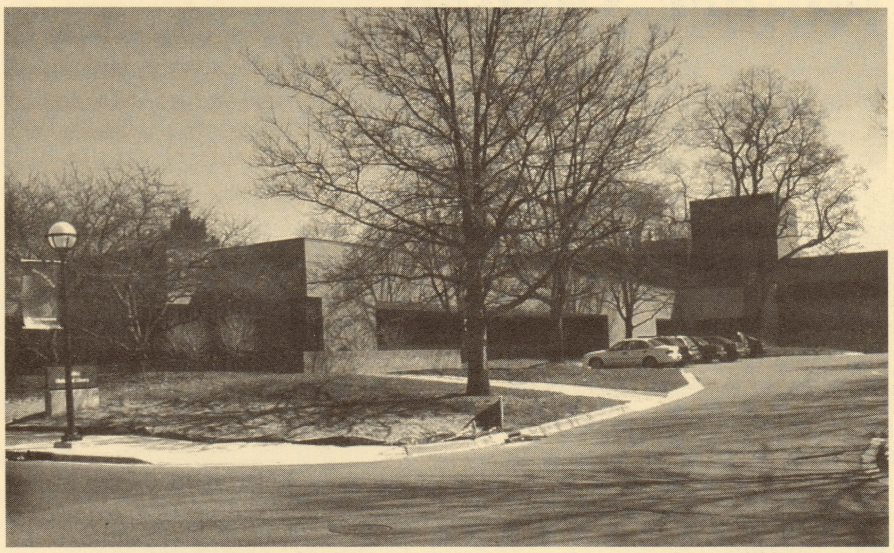
Program will feature Gladys Saborio and Sue Kosky who will tell us about the Sauk Trail. Tours of the Rentschler farmhouse will be available before supper for those who are interested.



Directions to Rentschler Farm for annual meeting Wednesday, May 18, 2005.

SUNDAY • MARCH 20, 2005

Tour Of The Bentley Historical Library's New Addition

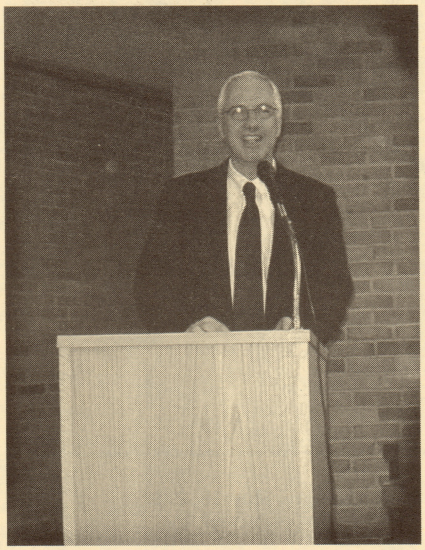


Photos by Judith Chrisman. **Bentley Historical Library, North Campus, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor**

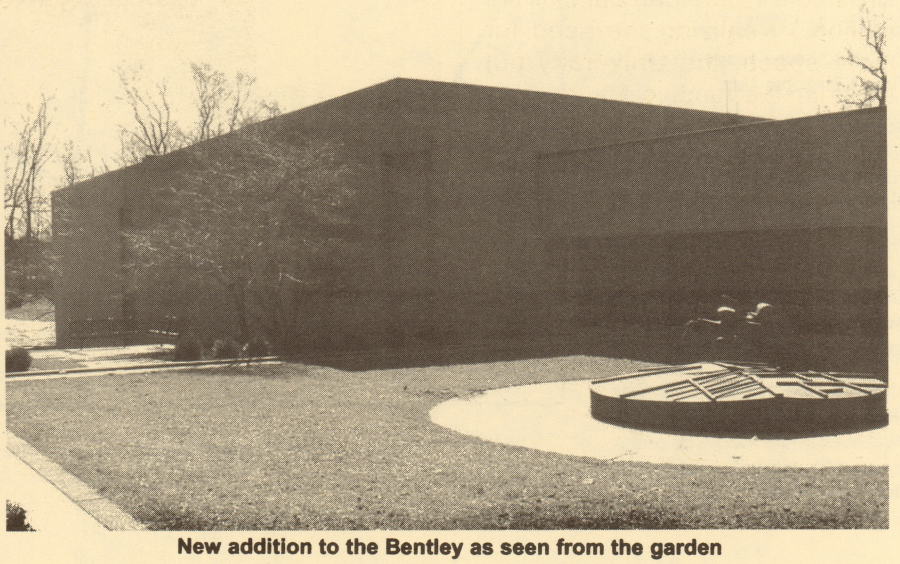
The Washtenaw County Historical Society was invited to tour the new addition to the Bentley Historical Library, 1150 Beal Avenue, University of Michigan North Campus, Ann Arbor, Michigan by Dr. Francis X. Blouin, Director. Dr. Blouin has a B. A., from Notre Dame and a Ph.D. in history from the University of Minnesota. Among his many achievements we cite the Getty Grant Program and the National Endowment for the Humanities grant for a project to apply modern archival descriptive methods to improve intellectual access to the Vatican Archives. Sept. 1989-Sept. 1992

The Bentley Library houses the University of Michigan archives and the Michigan Historical Collections. The collections are from every Michigan county and every period of its history. It is an extremely rich resource of more than 6,000 historical records from individuals and organizations.

The new addition was a long time in coming. The original building was finished in 1974. From the beginning it was clear we would run out of space sooner than we thought. In 1963 someone decided we should collect the 'papers of this obscure congressman from Grand Rapids as documentation from the other side of the state'. Since there was a lot of material, it was stored at Willow Run. Then in 1975, when President Nixon resigned, Gerald R. Ford became president and his papers became a bit more important than we had originally thought they might be so the papers were brought to the Bentley. They filled it up.



Dr. Francis X. Blouin, Director of Bentley Historical Library



New addition to the Bentley as seen from the garden

Dr. Blouin and guests in the reading room

The first stop on the tour was the reading room. It was closed during the summer of 2004 so new drainage pipes could be installed under the floor. New tables were added and some of the old tables were kept for reading maps. This part of the room now accommodates twice as many readers. New access connections under the tables now allow researchers to connect computers to the internet. The space originally used for maps and the storage of photos is now used for searching through the catalogues, computer and finding aides.

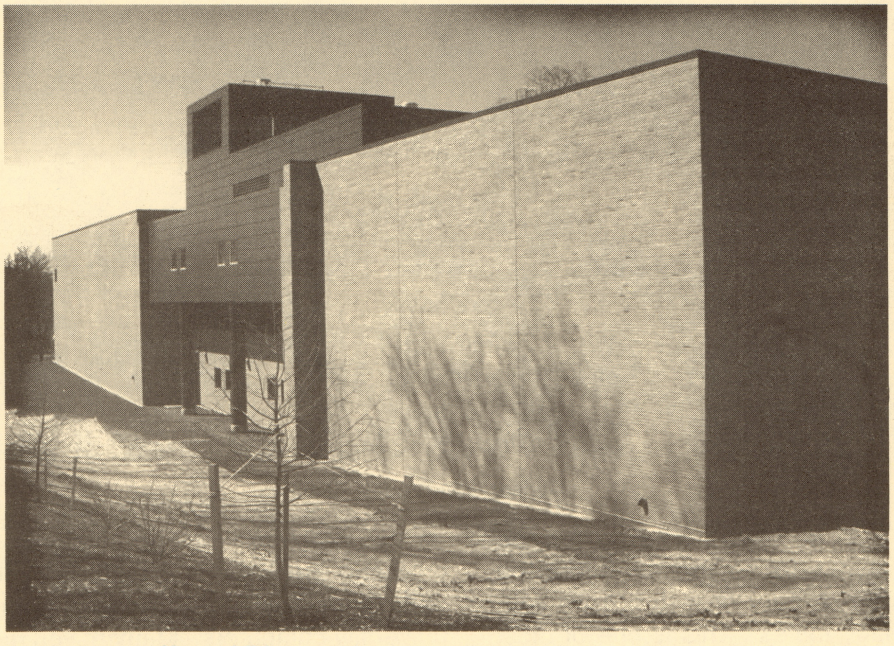
The Xerox operation center was also expanded. Last year we made 51,000 copies for researchers. The staff handles all of the copying to insure proper handling of the papers. We also used to copy pages from county histories but they are now online and can be printed out from the computer.

The tour then moved to the staff area. The first room was the cataloguing area where information is logged into a central database. Now that cataloguing is done on the computer we do not need as much space for secretarial support. This allows us to use this space to store the most-used large items so the staff does not have to go downstairs. These are mostly Michigan maps—county, city and territorial. The offices of the Curator of Printed Books and the Curator of Manuscripts are also in this room.

As the tour moved into the new addition we passed by the sorting room which is unchanged from the old days. It was used for sorting all collections as they came in. Now it is only used for sorting Michigan historical collections.

In 1977, we began to talk about an addition. Mrs. Alvin Bentley, who gave the funds for the original building in memory of her husband, former congressman and regent, agreed to give money for the addition. The architectural drawings and designs were done and Dr. Robert M. Warner took them to her for her approval. Before she could come here to sign the final papers, she died of a massive heart attack at the age of 55 so the gift was never completed

Between 1977 and 2004 we grew enormously. By 2000 we had 30,000 linear feet of material stored all over the place—here, across the street and up the street in a classroom in the North Campus fire station. Realizing the need for more space, the University put together the funding for the new addition. Jickling, Lyman and Powell, who also did the original building, used the original design with a few changes and also incorporated upgrades to the existing building. We wanted to preserve the sight line of the garden with its ambiance of a nature preserve because it is one of the great features of using the library. Future expansions will have to go into the garden because of lot limitations due to the cemetery.



New addition: north and south stacks with central core

The basic plan of the addition is a central portion with stack areas to the north and south. Since the original building was built, our responsibility to the University archives has grown enormously along with their requirements for more systematic retention and organization of the paper and electronic records. This big open space on the main level of the building is for sorting the enormous university collections, some as large 200 to 300 boxes at a time. We get material from regents, executive officers, deans, student papers and are still finding material from the 1800s.

Also in this room are the offices of the University archives staff of about 14 people. The last cubicle on the left is called the China room because there is a carved Chinese screen donated by Roscoe Bonisteel on one wall. Removing the scrub forest to accommodate the new addition opened up a beautiful view for the offices.

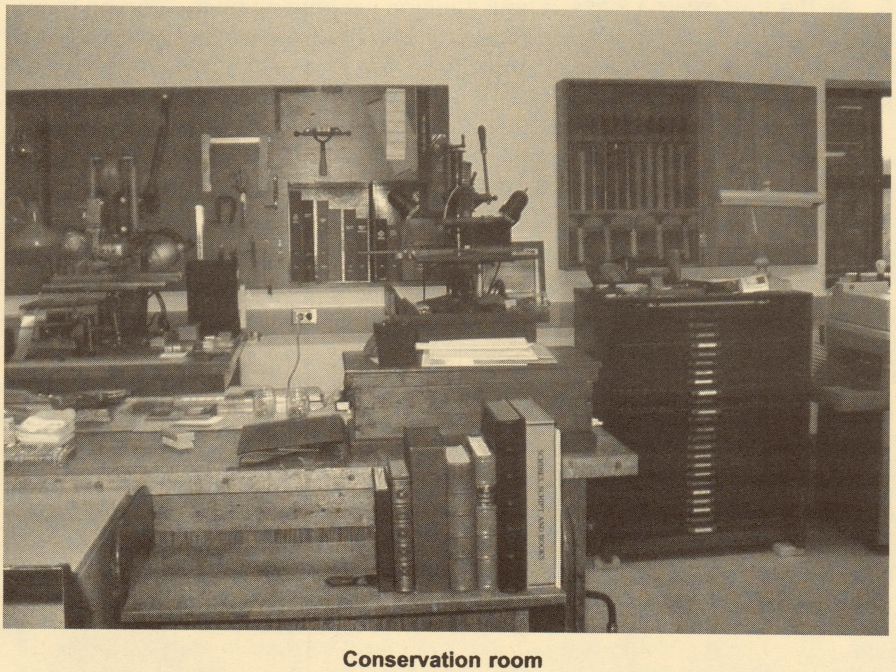
up-to-date rare book conservation facilities in the country. James Craven, conservator, has been with the university for 56 years. Books and manuscripts that are torn, need to be deacidified or need bindings repaired are brought here. Most of the procedures for mold removal have been decertified by OSHA so we try not to bring in mold. We can still use one procedure but we do it in the garage.

The unshelved south stack is a large open space three stories tall with a temporary balcony along the top of one wall for egress. On one wall there are three elevator doors which are indications of where the floors will be. The iron shelving system does not need separate floors built in as it forms its own floors as it is installed. The University Museum of Art will use this space for storing things while they are remodeling.

After leaving the unfinished stack area, the group returned to the conservation area and continued with the tour. We passed the cold storage film room where photographic materials, including 7,000 films from the university media labs, are stored and entered a storage area which is in the original section of the basement. This used to be the conservation area. It is now used to store large items that do not fit in the regular stack area such as architectural drawings, prints and maps. A recent addition to this area is the Albert Kahn collection.

The tour then returned to the new section and went into the north stacks which have been shelved. The three-level rigid steel system is designed to store the maximum number of Page boxes allowing 120% more storage than in the original building. The ADA wanted wider aisles but the library was able to get an exemption because only staff members work there. The stacks are organized by location which made it necessary to rewrite the location guide once the material was moved.

From the stacks we returned to the reading room and then to the meeting room.



Conservation room

The tour then moved downstairs to the conservation area, a very crowded area with many tables. This is one of most

Questions

Q: I noticed boxes labeled Michigan Bell. Do you collect from companies?
A: Yes. The Michigan Bell collection is photographs of their installations and various kinds of equipment. It is in the neighborhood of 500,000 great photographs of small towns all across Michigan.

Q: I noticed several posters. Do you have a poster collection?
A: Yes, some of them go back to the Civil War and before.

Q: What is the long-range solution for storing computer documents now that they are not documents?
A: We are aware of the problem but haven't solved it yet. We are working on this problem first from the point of view of our responsibility to the university archives. In the new administrative area we are in the process of setting up a whole network of computers that will interrelate with the university computers. Many of you may remember the old time schedules.

Carmen and Jack Miller inspecting the new north stacks

Old stacks

These are no longer on paper, only on computer. At end of the term, the up-to-date class schedule is shipped to our server and stored in electronic form. There are other examples as well. I'm talking about the time schedules because we solved that one.

Q: What about email?
A: The email problem is not solved. Most people within the administration print out important email so we have a paper copy.

Q: How do you decide what to accept? Do you turn things down?
A: Everyone wants to have their things stored here. To manage our space somewhat logically there is a collections committee that decides whether we have the space. Sometimes collections that might seem important do not have the quality of papers that match the importance of the subject. They might be from someone who was very influential but did not keep good papers so the papers would be turned down. The committee first decides if the quality of the subject is important enough to keep and then decides if the quality of the papers match the quality of the subject.

Q: Do you sort through collections or keep it all?
A: We have to sort through and throw things out, especially 20th C. materials. In 19th C. people didn't really accumulate a lot and wrote sparingly and carefully so those collections tend to be tighter. With 20th C. materials, we get stuff you get in the mail such advertisements for Visa cards etc. If we keep that type of thing, it wears down the researcher so we tend to throw away that type of thing.

Q: Do you have any coins?
A: No, we don't collect coins

Q: What about the chair and the desk?
A: Frank Murphy, former Governor of Michigan and Mayor of Detroit, used the set when Governor-General of the Philippines. He was the last one to use the set so it came to the Bentley along with his papers. It is made of Philippine mahogany and dates from about 1898. The reason it is so large is that it was built for the first Governor-General, William Howard Taft.

Q: Isn't it unusual to have furniture as part of a collection?
A: We don't generally collect objects or paintings but some have come to us over the years. We also have some of G. Mennen William's African and Philippine artifacts

Desk and chair donated by Frank Murphy, former Governor-General of the Philippines

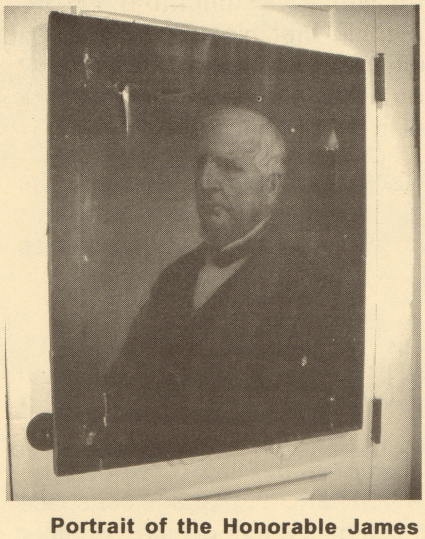
Q: Are most of governors of Michigan represented here?
A: About 30, including all since G. Mennen Williams. We just finished negotiating the John Engler papers, 452 boxes of materials have just arrived. Governor's papers in Michigan are considered private so we have papers back to Stevens T. Mason's first inaugural address.

Q: Do you still have the Gerald Ford papers?
A: All the Ford papers are at the Gerald Ford Library. We have no official administrative connection with them, just good friends and neighbors. Their library is a branch of the National Archives and Records Administration, a Federal agency and we are part of the University of Michigan.

Can You Help?

Our collection has many oil paintings, mostly portraits. Many of them need cleaning and several need repair. One example is the portrait of the Honorable James Kingsley, who came to Ann Arbor in 1826. He was one of the first practicing lawyers and a judge of probate. It was painted by Katie J. Rogers, a local accomplished artist in 1879 from a photograph. It is now on display as part of the current exhibit. There are several tears in the canvas.

Does anyone know of an experienced reliable conservator? We are also seeking donations to help with the restoration project. For information please call: 734 / 662-9092.



Portrait of the Honorable James Kingsley by Katie J. Rogers

Slate Of 2005/2006 WCHS Board Candidates

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Vice President
Ralph P. Beebe

Corresponding Secretary
Pauline V. Walters

Recording Secretary
Ann DeFreytas

Treasurer
Patricia W. Creal

Directors:
Three-year term ending 2008
Randy LaHote
Gladys Saborio
Susan Wineberg
Cynthia Yao

Endowment Committee
David LaMoreaux

Nominating Committee
Sue Kosky
Gladys Saborio
Rosemarion Blake

Nominations from the floor are permitted.

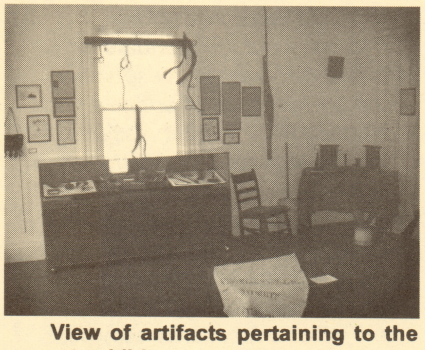
JUDITH CHRISMAN

President's Corner

The current exhibit, Michigan Territory Washtenaw County 1805-1836, has been very well received. The open house weekend, Saturday April 2 and Sunday April 3, featured sugar cookies in the shape of Michigan's lower peninsula made by your president.

Linen press from Bach estate with artifacts: picture of Lewis Cass, Territorial Governor on loan by Dr. Douglas Kelley: surveyor's chain and other equipment on loan by Atwell-Hicks Co.

Display case of artifacts from early 19th century



View of artifacts pertaining to the current exhibit

Photos by Judith Chrisman

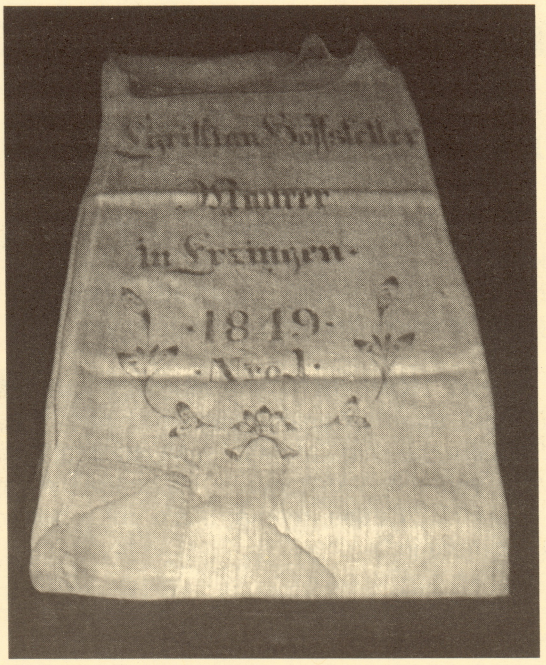
AMY ROSENBERG

Conservation Of An Immigrant's Sack

This immigrant bag can be seen in the current exhibit, Michigan Territory, Washtenaw County 1805-1836. Although it is from a later time period, it represents a type of object that was used by settlers to ship their belongings. The bag is 23 ½ inches by 55 ¾ inches. It is made out of a single piece of long, narrow fabric folded at the bottom and sewn along the sides. It appears to be hand woven in a 2/1 twill weave. The type of fiber is linen with linen stitching. It is natural, not dyed, and has kept its light beige coloring with occasional streaks of dark stain. There is a patch, which was applied with much accuracy and care with the same material as the sack.

The sack is identified with writing that is either hand done or stenciled. The writing is black ink or paint. It says "Christian Hoffstetter, Maurer, in Erzingen, 1849, Nro{?}" It is taken to mean Christian Hoffstetter; Stone Mason from Erzingen; 1849; Nro(?). The last word was taken to be the name of a ship. Beneath the writing is a decorative floral design. Pinned inside the sack is the following:

"Property of Reuben Hoffstetter. These linen bags carried the belongings of Grandfather Hoffstetter (Christian) from Germany when he sailed to this country USA in 1849. The bags are well preserved. (initials) RJH"



Christian Hoffstetter's immigrant sack

To conserve a sack such as this. Firstly, it should be kept out of sunlight, since the ultraviolet rays can break down the structures of the fibers. Secondly, it should not be washed. If it is necessary to wash it, only water should be used. The inks or paint should be checked before you wet it. Remember, anything that bleaches or softens the textile fibers will continue to break them down and, thus, discolor the textile, even if it is rinsed thoroughly. It should not be ironed since you don't want to heat it. The dyes, too, will be affected if heated. Since folding will stress the fibers, it should be stored flat or rolled up on an acid-free tube and covered with a clean piece of acid-free paper or cotton cloth. If storage space is limited and it must be folded, the folds should be padded with rolls of acid-free tissue

If you have any questions just address them to Amy Rosenberg, Washtenaw County Historical Society Museum wchs-500@ameritech.net

MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET
A Museum Of County Life

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-3336

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WEDNESDAY • 6 PM
DINE • 6:30 PM
MAY 18, 2005

"ANNUAL MEETING & POTLUCK"

RENTSCHLER FARM BARN
1265 E. MICHIGAN AVENUE
SALINE, MI

MEMBER 2005
NANCY KROHN
905 ROBIN RD
ANN ARBOR MI 48103-3008

From The Mouths Of Babes -

LOGICAL – A little five-year-old was begging his mother to buy him a knife. She said, "We will wait and ask papa, for you know a part of you belongs to him." After a moment's silence he looked up and said, "But the part that wants the knife belongs to you." He got the knife.

PUT MORE IN – One morning, just before starting to school, little Bobbie, aged six years, was watching his mama put up his noon lunch. Suddenly he said: "Mama, I wish you'd let Katie put up my lunch instead of doin' yourself. Won't you?" "It's no trouble, my dear." "I know." Then why ———?" "'Cause, mama, she's got a better appetite than you, an' she puts more in."

FLOORING PAPA – Five-year-old Tommy was being put through a test in numbers, before the admiring family, one day at dinner. Finally, papa asked him the question that had proved the Waterloo of the older children in past years. "Now, Tommy" said papa, "How many are two apples and three pears?" "Five fruits!" promptly answered Tommy.

From *THE DELINEATOR*, August 1908, a magazine from the Butterick Publishing Company.

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Washtenaw County Historical Society is to foster interest in and to elucidate the history of Washtenaw County from the time of the original inhabitants to the present. Its mission shall be to carry out the mandate as stated through the preservation and presentation of artifacts and information by exhibit, assembly, and publication. And to teach, especially our youth, the facts, value and the uses of Washtenaw County history through exhibits in museums and classrooms, classes, tours to historical places, and other educational activities.